

SURVEY SUMMARY

FORWARD Covid-19 survey

CORONAVIRUS AND BAME WOMEN

FORWARD

INTRODUCTION

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities have been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

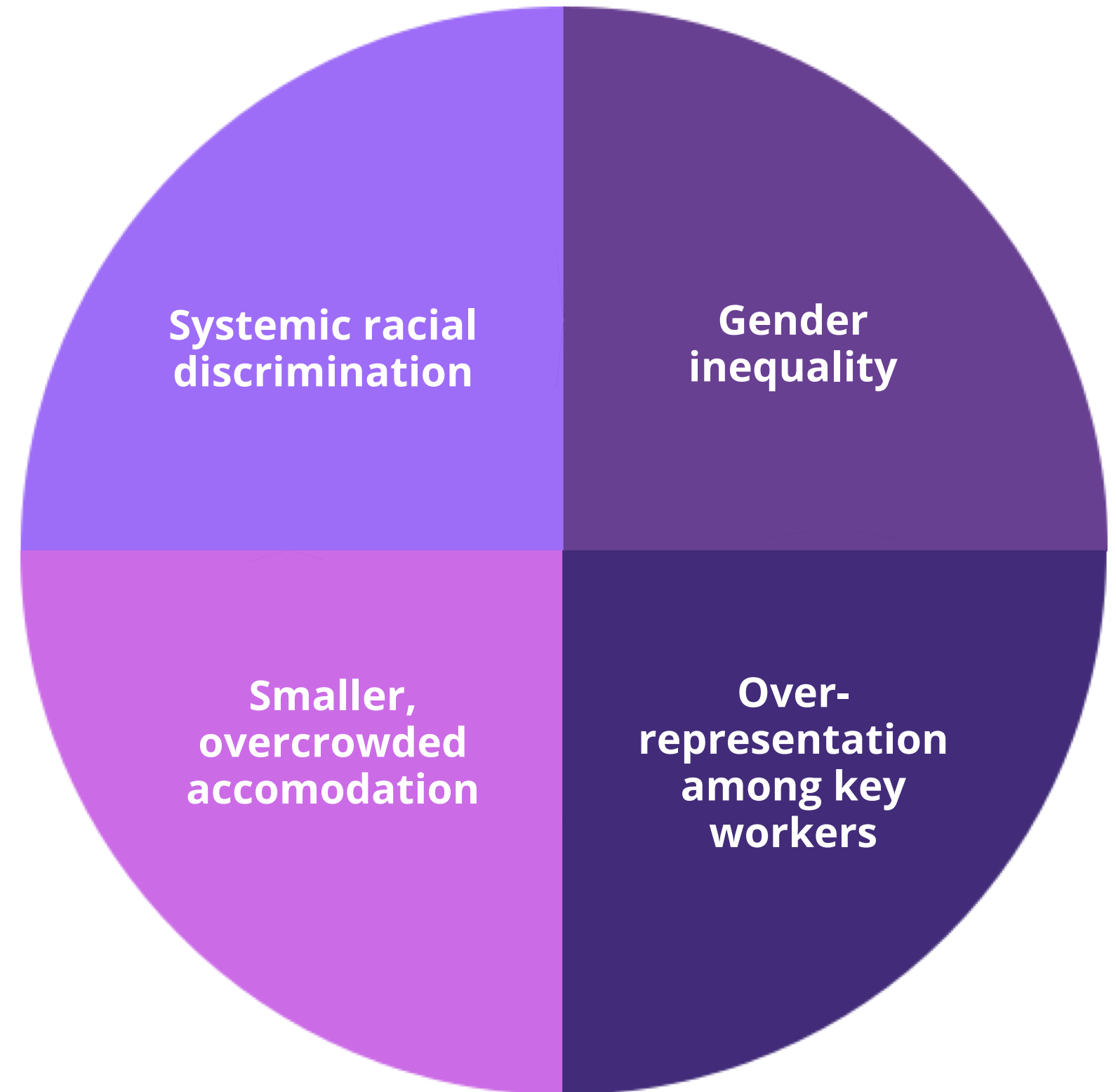
- BAME communities are more vulnerable to Covid-19 than the rest of the population.

- Black people are four times as likely to die from Covid-19 than white people.

- Women are bearing the brunt of lockdown (childcare and housework, losing jobs more than men, and more vulnerable to domestic abuse).

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has exposed existing health, economic and social inequalities. These complex and interlocking factors underlie the disproportionate risk and impact suffered by BAME communities, and in particular BAME women.



INTRODUCTION

FORWARD Covid-19 survey

Between May and June 2020, FORWARD conducted an online survey among BAME women in our networks and social media following to get insights into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on their lives.

Objectives

- Examine the experiences, concerns and needs of BAME women during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Identify ways to better support women during this time.

INTRODUCTION

Survey Sample

A total of 116 BAME women took part in the survey. Participants were recruited via FORWARD’s national network (e.g. social media, newsletter, national partners).

Participants were of different ethnicities, ages and geographical locations. But, the majority were young women from Black African and Caribbean communities, living in London.

Age	%
18 - 24	35
25 - 34	28
35 - 44	15
45 - 54	14
55 - 64	7
65 +	2
Ethnicity	
Black/Black British - African	47
Black/Black British - Caribbean	16
Black/Black British - other	3
Asian/Asian British	19
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	12
Other ethnic group	3
Region	
Greater London	53
South East England	13
South West England	5
East of England	1
West Midlands	5
East Midlands	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	3
North West England	10
Wales	3
Scotland	2
Northern Ireland	1

INTRODUCTION

A note on findings

Our survey represents the views and experiences of the women who participated in our survey. It does not attempt to offer a nationally representative picture of the experiences of BAME women in the UK or how their experiences compare to other ethnic groups. The findings are for exploratory insights and should not be used to draw concrete statistical conclusions.

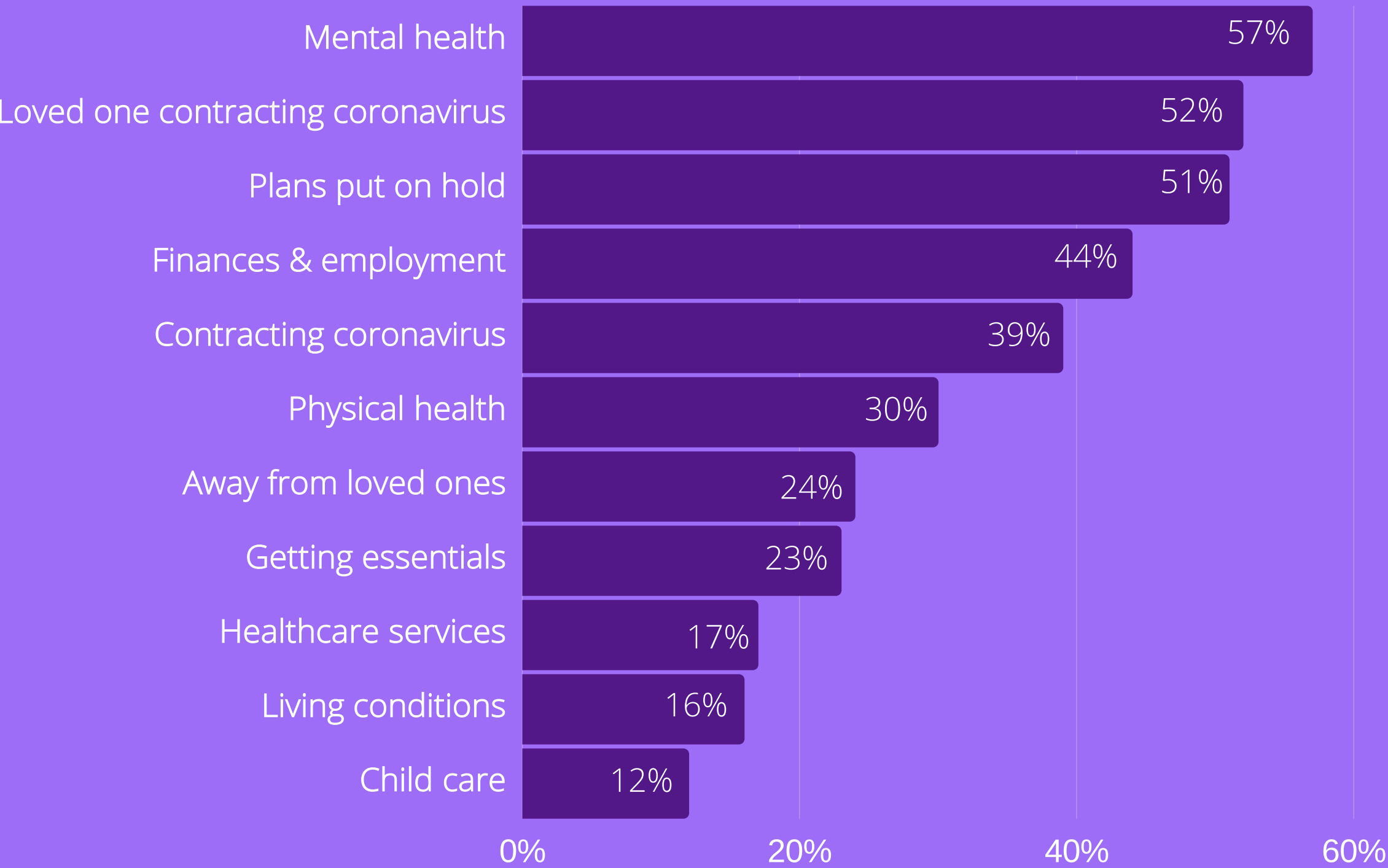
While we report on findings from BAME women participants as a group, due to limitations in study scale, we recognise that this approach does not in any way represent the diversity and unique experiences of women from different communities.

Worries and concerns

A pandemic can be a stressful time, from fear about one's own health and that of loved ones, to anxiety about isolation, work, finances, and access to health and support services.

We asked BAME women participating in our survey to tell us the issues currently worrying them a great deal.

Worries and concerns during the pandemic



Percentage of participants worried about the above issues a great deal

Mental health is the most prevalent source of worry for BAME women surveyed, with nearly three in five concerned about their mental wellbeing. This is followed by fear of loved ones contracting coronavirus, plans being put on hold, and finances and employment.

FINDINGS

Mental health and wellbeing

Persistent inequalities in housing, employment, and finances, among other issues, are now having a greater impact on the mental health of BAME communities¹.

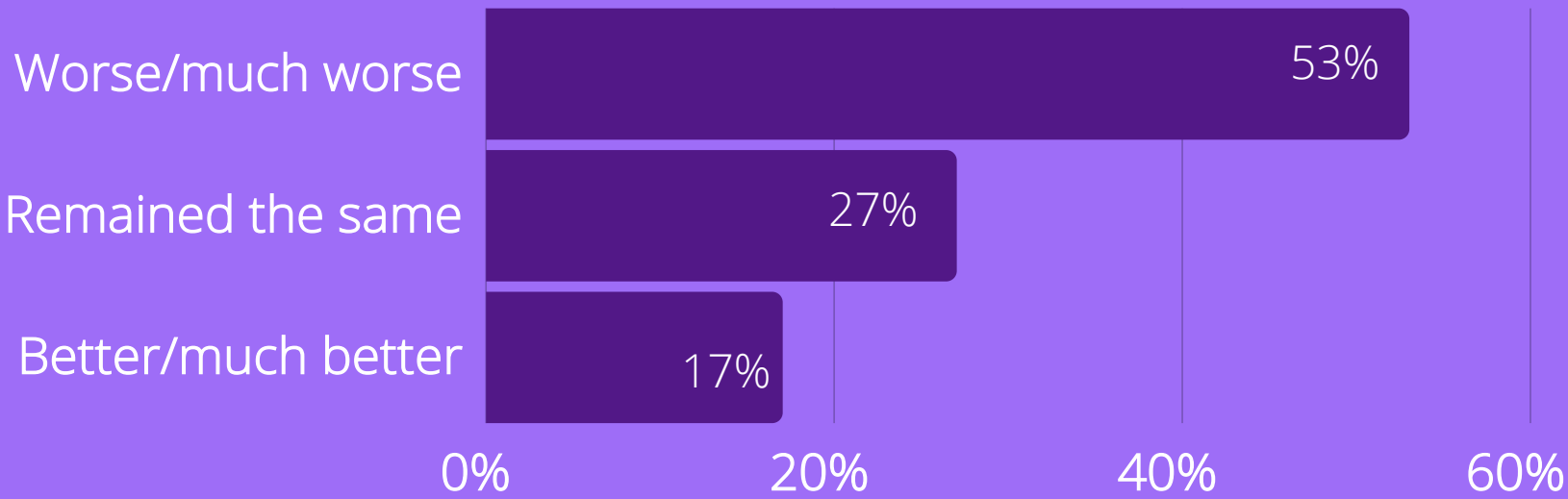
Our survey sought to better understand how the pandemic is impacting the mental wellbeing of BAME women.

¹ Existing inequalities have made mental health of BAME groups worse during pandemic. Mind (2020).

FINDINGS

BAME women's mental health during the pandemic

Over half (53%) of participants in our survey reported that their their mental wellbeing is somewhat worse or much worse now than before the pandemic.



Percentage of participants who felt their mental wellbeing was worse, better, or remained the same. (N=116).

They reported a mix of emotions, predominantly negative, with 52% reporting feeling anxious or nervous.



Reported emotions. Size of text indicates frequency.

FINDINGS



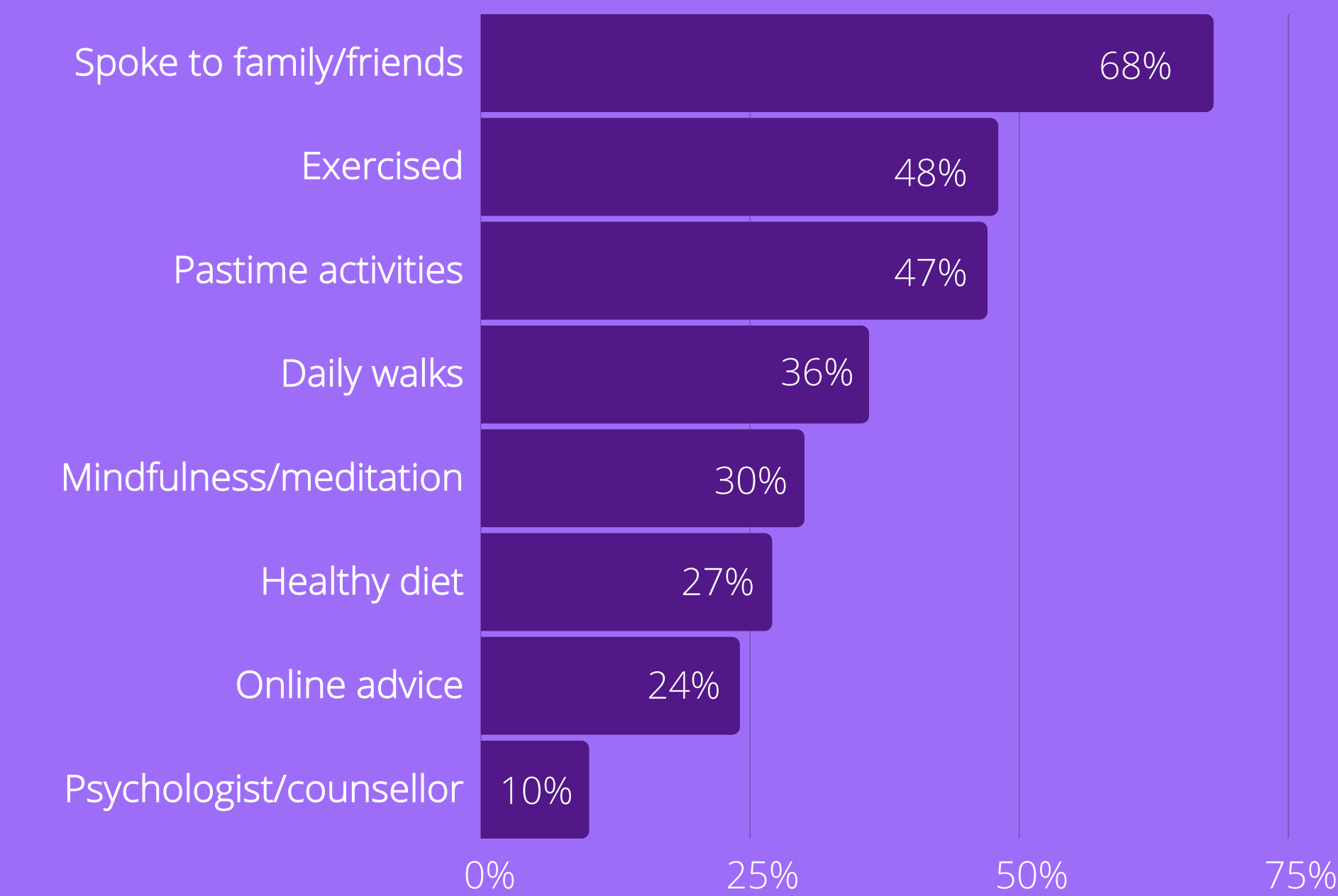
"We had to adjust and put our life on hold because my sick child didn't get any help or support. I was anxious, confused, scared. Infections were rising, death was everywhere, my neighbor's husband died."

"I was overwhelmed as we were stuck in a one bedroom flat with my 2-year-old son."

Participants said that issues such as being isolated from loved ones, being stuck in overcrowded accommodation, losing a job, not having access to support, witnessing death in their community, and fear of contracting coronavirus as key factors impacting their mental health and wellbeing.

FINDINGS

What are BAME women doing to support their mental wellbeing?



Percentage of participants doing the above activities to support their mental health. (N=116)

Despite concerns over their mental health, only a small minority (10%) had sought professional help from a psychologist or counsellor. While lockdown restrictions may be a factor, evidence suggests that lack of culturally appropriate mental health services is a key barrier².

² Mental health inequalities facing UK minority ethnic populations (2013). Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture.

FINDINGS

Coronavirus risk & health

BAME communities are more vulnerable to Covid-19 than the rest of the population, and Black people, have been four times as likely to die from Covid-19 compared to white people³.

Our survey explored the risks facing BAME women in order to better understand how to support them during the pandemic.

³ Emerging findings on the impact of COVID-19 on black and minority ethnic people. Health Foundation (2020).

FINDINGS

Our research found that a significant proportion of BAME women surveyed and those close to them are at high risk of contracting coronavirus. This is not surprising given that a third are key workers.

One in ten of participants have someone close to them who has been hospitalized or died due to coronavirus.

32%
are key workers

11%
Lost someone close
due to coronavirus

46%
Live with a key
worker

17%
Know someone
hospitalised

Finances & employment

BAME communities are among those hit hardest by job losses⁴, and BAME women are more likely than any other group to worry about debt⁵.

Understanding these concerns would help us better support BAME women.

⁴ Black, minority Britons hit hardest by COVID job losses, researchers say. Reuters (2020)

⁵ BAME women and Covid-19 – Research evidence. Fawcett society (2020)

FINDINGS



“My husband lost his job as a security guard and we were both worried about how we will make it through financially. We applied for job seekers allowance which would take time, and borrowed money from friends for back up.”

“Just before the pandemic I started working part-time at a care home. But I had to stop working as I didn't have anyone to help me with childcare.”

A quarter (26%) of participants had experienced a significant reduction in household income.

They reported job loss, having to quit employment due to childcare, applying for financial support, and borrowing money from friends to stay afloat.

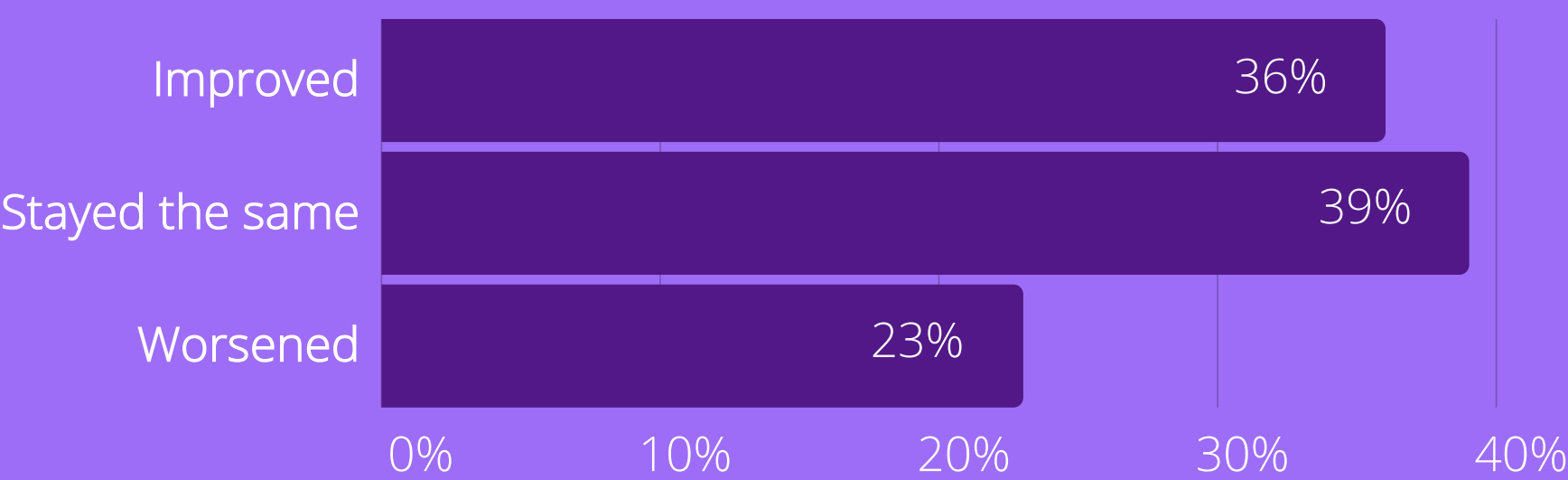
FINDINGS

Relationships with others in the household



The pandemic has brought changes in household relationships. For many it has had a positive impact, in some cases bringing households closer together. In other cases, however, relationships have been strained due to home-schooling, reduced personal space and privacy, or economic and financial pressures.

Relationship with people in the household



Percentage of participants who felt their relationship with people in the household improved, stayed the same, or worsened. (N=116)

BAME women participating in our research had mixed experiences, with some seeing their relationship with others in the household improve, while others seeing it worsen.

FINDINGS



"I've moved back in with my parents so I see them every day. This has increased my feelings of closeness to them in a good way. My mother and father are shielding so I play a protective role for them, getting their food, medicine and other essentials."

"It's been a joy being able to spend this much time with my husband. I feel closer to him than ever."

Women who believe their relationships have **improved** said that the lockdown has provided the opportunity to spend more time with family members.

FINDINGS

Women who have had **less positive** experiences described as key factors reduced personal space and privacy at home, and cultural and inter-generational tensions.



“Cultural pressures are placed on me by my parents who are aware of how I do not marry up to the cultural stereotypical view of women and their role in the household. They use all the time to make me aware of how I fail to fit their mould.”

“My father is not used to me being back home and has a hard time coping with my need for independence as an adult.”

Domestic abuse

The lockdown has resulted in a sharp increase in experiences of domestic abuse among women both globally and in the UK⁶.

Our survey asked participants to tell us if they had experienced any form of domestic abuse, using a sensitively worded list (e.g. emotional manipulation, physical harm).

⁶ Coronavirus: Domestic abuse website visits up 10-fold, charity says. BBC (2020)

FINDINGS

An alarming **seven per cent** of BAME women in our research had experienced domestic abuse, particularly emotional abuse such as gaslighting, manipulation, attempts to put them down, control their movement, or stop them speaking to family or friends.

7%

Experienced gaslighting (someone making them doubt their sanity or grasp of reality)

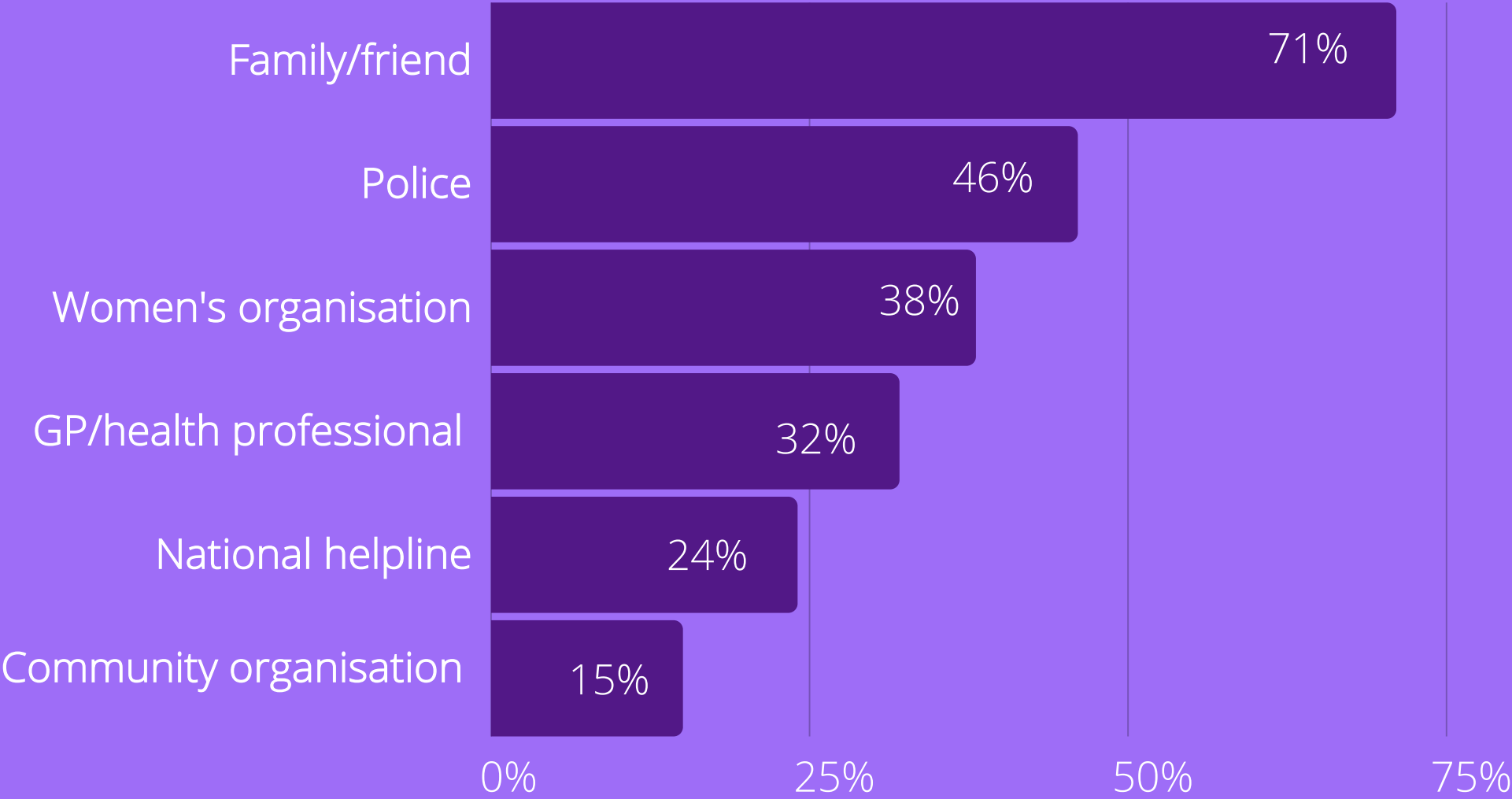
4%

Experienced emotional abuse (manipulation, attempt to put them down, or cut them off from family and friends)

1%

Experienced physical harm

Where would BAME women seek support if they feel unsafe?



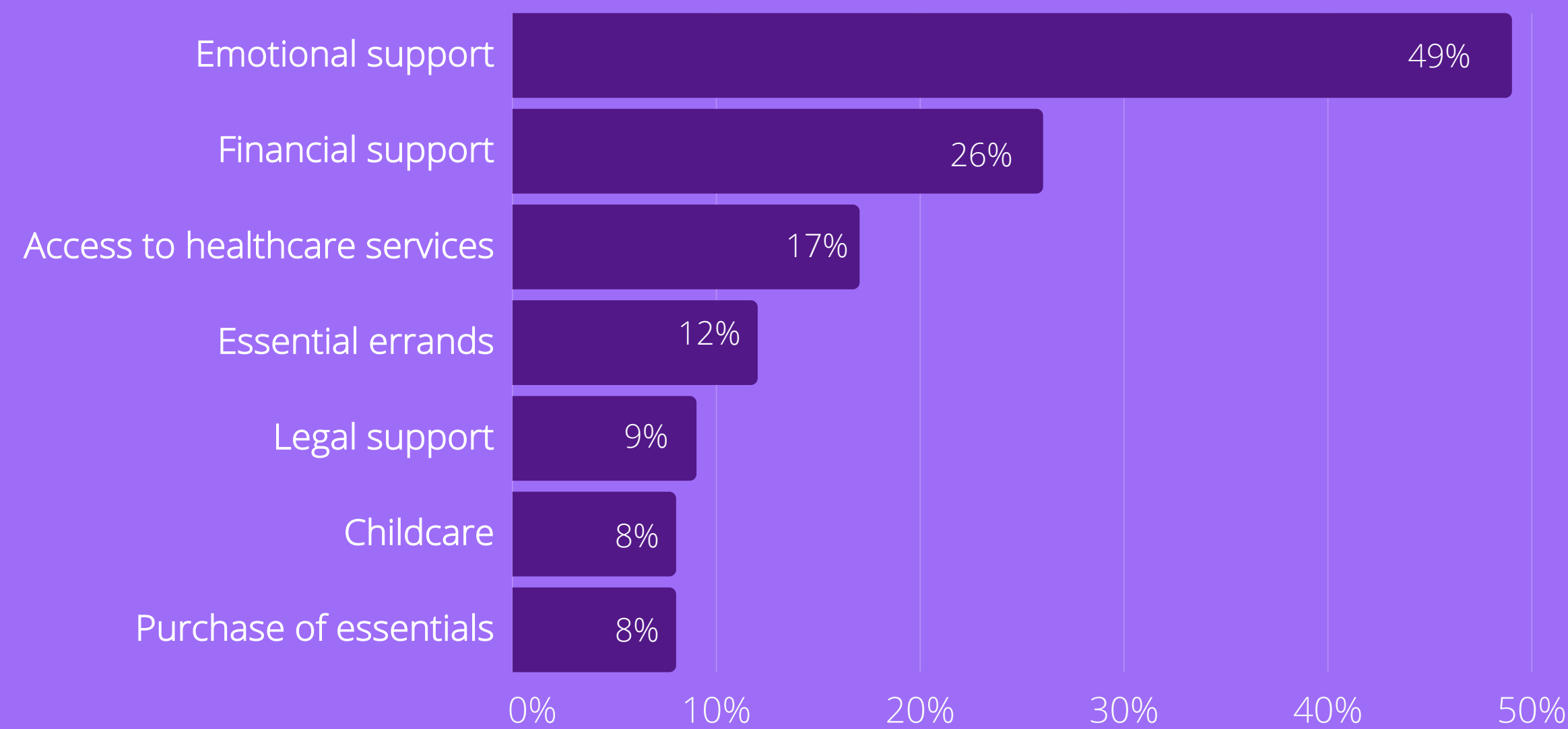
Percentage of participants who would seek support from the above sources. (N=116)

When asked where they would seek support if feeling unsafe, a majority would speak to family and friends, rather than seeking formal support such as the police, women’s organisations, their GP, or a national helpline.

Support needs

We asked BAME women participating in our research to tell us the support services they consider to be an urgent need for them and their families during this time.

Urgent support needs of participants



Half of participants (49%) considered emotional support, such as therapy or counselling, to be an urgent for them. This was followed by financial support.

Percentage of participants who would seek support from the above sources.
(N=116)

Recommendations

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Emergency funds should be provided to community-led organisations offering culturally sensitive mental health support. Long-term investment in inclusive national mental health services such as ethnic diversity of staff are urgently needed to effectively support BAME communities, and tackle structural discrimination in service provision.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Signposting and referrals for financial support and services available to the BAME women should be stepped up to mitigate structural and language barriers. Immediate support is urgently required for women who are most vulnerable due to having no recourse to public funds.

DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

Urgent funding should be directed to BAME community-led initiatives to raise awareness and reduce stigmatization of domestic abuse. There is also a pressing need for increased investment in culturally appropriate national domestic abuse support services.

READ THE FULL REPORT

Read our full report submitted to the House of Commons' Women and Equalities Committee at:

[committees.parliament.uk/written
evidence/8651/pdf/](https://committees.parliament.uk/written-evidence/8651/pdf/)

TAKE PART IN OUR RESEARCH

FORWARD is holding further interviews and focus groups to learn more about BAME women's experiences and needs.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact us at:

forward@forwarduk.org.uk

FIND SUPPORT

FORWARD offers culturally sensitive support and counselling for BAME women experiencing mental health problems or facing violence. We also provide signposting to other legal or financial services. If you need support, contact us at:

support@forwarduk.org.uk

ABOUT FORWARD

FORWARD (Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development) is the African women-led organisation working to end violence against women and girls. From female genital mutilation and child marriage to domestic and sexual violence, we tackle abuse and discrimination – enabling African women and girls to achieve the dignity and equality that they deserve.

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